

A SUMMARY OF PRINCIPAL LESSONS LEARNED FROM USAID EXPERIENCE IN HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

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OVERVIEW

In 1995, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) launched an effort to measure the performance of its humanitarian assistance programs. This was a renewed expression of USAID's commitment to humanitarian assistance development, dating back at least to the enactment of food aid authorizing legislation passed in 1954. Given the relatively short time that USAID has consistently focused on evaluating humanitarian assistance activities, and the long-term commitment of the Agency in responding to emergency situations around the world, the following lessons learned should be considered both preliminary and tentative.

Literature consulted in this summary includes the publications of USAID's Center for Development Information and Evaluation, evaluations produced by the Agency's regional and functional bureaus and development partners, and documents from USAID's 1996 country strategy reviews. The first section presents management lessons learned. The second section describes technical lessons learned that are unique to particular program areas in humanitarian assistance, namely: (1) health; (2) water; (3) food relief; (4) food for work; (5) security; (6) orphans; (7) education/training; and (8) logistics. This is not an exhaustive list of humanitarian assistance activity areas; it is limited to those subjects that have been analyzed by the documents reviewed. The last section presents a bibliography of sources used in this review.

MANAGEMENT LESSONS LEARNED

FLEXIBILITY:

In emergency situations it is imperative to maintain processes that are simple and flexible, while remaining consistent with good management practices.

A flexible and adjustable design is crucial for maximizing assistance effectively for purposes that may not be originally foreseen in the initial strategy (PDABL051, Pakistan; PDABK560, Nicaragua; PDABJ697, El Salvador; PDABK221, Afghanistan).

Likewise, USAID should maintain implementation flexibility, and keep the implementation process as simple as possible, consistent with good management (PDABJ281, El Salvador; PNABI659, El Salvador; PDABK221, Afghanistan; PDABK843, El Salvador; PDABJ202, Afghanistan).

PREPAREDNESS:

Early Warning of disasters should be linked to decision makers.

"Timely and well documented warnings are not always heeded by government officials and donors. A conscious effort is necessary, therefore, to capture the attention of decision makers and stimulate them to action." (PDABI805, Southern Africa).

Training indigenous partner organizations for humanitarian assistance early warning can allow partners to preposition commodities before an expected disaster (Niger R2).

Timely communication is an essential part of early warning systems. Electronic communications systems have been created, reducing the time needed for communicating information that is essential in preparing for and mitigating disasters. (Sahel Regional R2).

The donor community should strongly encourage host country governments to develop and update their disaster response plans.

Host country governments need to refine their criteria for assessing vulnerability before the next emergency strikes (PDABI808, Southern Africa).

Host country governments must understand the importance of making concerted efforts to rapidly develop their own human, organizational, and material resources -- as well as the capability of disaster-affiliated organizations -- when preparing their emergency response plans (PDABK562, Costa Rica; PDABK560, Nicaragua).

USAID Missions should develop their own disaster response plans.

USG Missions must have up-to-date disaster response plans in place along with the key operational staff, as well as a stockpile of basic emergency supplies, available for timely response. Likewise, Missions should not rely on other organizations for disaster preparedness (PDABK562, Costa Rica; PDABI804, Southern Africa; PDABK560, Nicaragua).

TIMING:

Timing is crucial in emergency relief response.

Delays in funding and implementation can have a debilitating effect of the rapidity of the response (PDABK558, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Zambia; PNABI659, El Salvador).

Because traditional procurement procedures are frequently too cumbersome for effective and rapid response to disasters, USAID must innovate new or adapt old mechanisms (PDABI805, Southern Africa; PDABK843, El Salvador).

** For example, a very effective way to assure a fast start-up of implementation has included the addition of funds to existing projects, which can add components to meet requirements (PNABI659, El Salvador).*

** Likewise, Project Implementation Orders for services or commodities should be issued immediately following the signing of a project agreement in order to initiate implementation and/or allow implementation to proceed (PDABK843, El Salvador).*

** Similarly, Commodity Exchange Programs can provide a 'rapid response' capability which enables Missions to quickly respond to the ever-changing operational environment of humanitarian crisis (PDABJ204, Afghanistan).*

On the other hand, overly ambitious time-frames for implementation of peace accords, combined with budget constraints, have strained USAID's capacities and abilities to respond.

Implementation of peace accords should be flexible and responsive to the on-the-ground realities within the transitioning countries (Sustainable Development & Democracy in El Salvador).

** For example, early suppositions about the transition from war to peace may have to be radically modified as the process of demobilization and reintegration of soldiers gets underway (Sustainable Development & Democracy in El Salvador).*

** Likewise, budget constraints have forced USAID to lengthen its obligation time-frame in order to honor their assistance pledge (Sustainable Development & Democracy in El Salvador).*

In particular, the structure and timing of assistance in the agricultural sector are critical to avoiding problems.

Strong efforts must be made to provide needed assistance at least four months before the start of the agricultural cycle, otherwise a crop year will be lost. (PNABI659, El Salvador; PDABI943, Peru).

Host governments should be prepared to use their resources to fill gaps between donor pledges and actual disbursement of resources.

"The period between donor pledges and actual delivery of food commodities is so long that even if a country reacts promptly to mobilize donor interest response, it also will have to use its own resources to purchase its earliest requirements" (PDABI805, Southern Africa).

OVERSIGHT:

USAID should maintain as much control as it can over decisions regarding humanitarian assistance programs.

"Mission commitment is important to the effective implementation of a program, and oversight responsibility by the Mission needs to be clearly stated" (PDABK558, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Zambia).

"The degree of control maintained by donors in allocating resources and managing relief efforts should be based on a government's capabilities, legitimacy, and accountability to its citizens. The less capable or legitimate a government, the less a government should be permitted authority over the programming of donated emergency commodities" (PDABI804, Southern Africa).

"If donors decide not to support monetization of granted emergency commodities in order to avoid the host government coopting the process for political gain, then donors must maintain a high degree of control over decisions regarding resource input levels and in-country distribution. (PDABI804, Southern Africa).

"Don't accept poor leadership from the COP [cooperative agreement]: ... insist on a clause which clearly gives USAID the upper hand when it comes to selecting the person in charge of the Project" (PDABK221, Afghanistan).

"A 'zero' sector grant option should be part of the design." USAID leverage for compliance on agreed upon policy benchmarks was limited because of the promised multi-year package of assistance. The Mission could have shifted sector grant money to a "country implementation plan" or to project activities if there was a 'zero' option. (PDABL051, Pakistan).

USAID should maintain some funds under its control either by obligating them directly to contractors or PVOs as funds are needed and available, or by setting aside some funds in the Project Agreement for direct USAID implementation (PNABI659, El Salvador).

However, USAID can not realistically expect to have full control over the use of its resources. Host governments should be held accountable for use of USG commodities.

"USAID funds and/or influence within a country can be such that it can get the head of a host country agency to agree to implement a project or activity which the agency cannot handle or is not truly interested in doing. When this happens, USAID may find that the agency as a whole is structurally unwilling and/or unable to devote the necessary attention to the project or activity to make it work." (PDABK843, El Salvador).

Host governments should be held accountable for the use of USG commodities and, in that way, at least, USAID would indirectly control their use (PDABK560, Nicaragua).

"A too proactive donor role may lead to the host government making less effort to support the program. Responsibility should be placed on the host government as much as possible." (PDABJ697, El Salvador).

DESIGN:

Defining theoretical and operational terms and responsibilities reduces confusion and increases efficiency.

Despite the high level of coordination achieved in many projects, there is often no full agreement around key concepts like "unaccompanied children," "refugee," etc. The same can happen with almost all the concepts of the program, which then prove unable to be formulated in terms of variables, categories of the variables, indicators, and sources of data for the indicators. This can affect the efficiency and effectiveness of the program as a whole and the consolidation of the program outputs (PDABJ468, Malawi and Zimbabwe).

The "increasing cooperation of the military and OFDA in complex disasters requires increased specificity of roles, functions, and responsibilities essential to dealing with both the complexity and changing conditions of a response" (PDABM622, Northern Iraq).

Phasing of humanitarian assistance activities is critical.

"Prepare work plans early: ... insist more strongly that detailed work plans [with identifiable indicators] be produced earlier on, prior to implementation" (PDABK221, Afghanistan).

"Financing of operational costs should be phased-out and government's funding phased-in gradually rather than a sudden stoppage of donor financing at the end of the project" (PDABL051, Pakistan).

"When the program is closing out, the logistics contractor should be the last to go" (PDABJ204, Afghanistan).

"Emergency responses should be phased-out with care and flexibility. Commercial assistance should terminate early enough so that it does not provide disincentive to local production or depress prices for post-drought harvests." (PDABI806, Southern Africa).

"Targeting a specific group must be carefully managed -- Targeting assistance to a special group such as the displaced will inevitably cause problems as distinctions are made with the poor majority. Those problems need to be carefully and flexibly managed. To keep such problems to a minimum, graduation from special status should occur as early as possible and in accordance with specific criteria and a deliberate plan." (PDABJ697, El Salvador).

The creation of special strategies and implementing units for humanitarian assistance can be helpful to the implementation process (PDABK843, El Salvador).

"There may be a need for new sector strategies for areas in which the USAID has not worked or for modification of existing strategies to fit the needs of the peace and national recovery project" (PNABI659, El Salvador).

"Special implementing units for projects or activities can be helpful to the implementation process; however, they can also be an impediment to institutional improvement. The staff of the implementing unit may receive valuable training, but if these personnel are on contract, they may seek better positions during their employment and probably will be lost to the agency at the end of the project anyway." (PDABK843, El Salvador).

"Use of a central procurement agent to act on behalf of the entire Mission, its contractors and grantees, insured compliance with U.S. government regulations and effected cost savings through efficiencies of scale and elimination of duplicate layers of professional staff and logistical capabilities. However, having a procurement contractor does not eliminate the need for the implementing contracts to have competent technical staff to prepare adequate specifications to insure that items of a specialized nature, such as farm machinery, medicines and medical equipment, fertilizer, etc. will meet their needs." (PDABJ204, Afghanistan).

"The Afghan program, operating as it did, without the benefit of host-country counterpart institutions and personnel, could not have successfully fulfilled its mandate without the Technical Assistance component of [the project]" (PDABI337, Afghanistan).

The participation of local communities and organizations is imperative for the successful design and implementation of humanitarian activities.

The involvement of a country's minority and other excluded populations in baseline research is necessary for a successful program (Guatemala R4).

"Involve farmers in project plans: ... conduct some kind of training exercise which would involve local farmers in the production of project plans" (PDABK221, Afghanistan).

"NGOs probably will be a desirable and necessary resource for participatory project design and implementation" (PNABI659, El Salvador).

Meticulously planned and documented programs tend to require considerable staff time. The costs of monitoring and engineering was almost nil while the involvement of farmers in the planning and execution was maximal. As a result, the commitment of the farmers was very high and the product was of superb quality. (PDABK221, Afghanistan).

"Representatives of beneficiaries should participate to the maximum extent feasible in the design and implementation of programs designed for their benefit. ... USAID may find that meeting with insurgents before the signing of a peace agreement is impossible, there may be a need for two stages in the design process. The first stage would begin as soon as the need for the project is determined and would design the obvious and non-controversial humanitarian, infrastructure and government service requirements which would be needed immediately after

the cessation of hostilities, and prepare a rough draft of a design for the remainder of the project. The second state would begin as soon as the insurgents could be included in the design process." (PNABI659, El Salvador).

Successful humanitarian assistance projects need adequate information in order to be relevant to local needs.

"Where extraordinary imports of relief aid are contemplated, an internal logistics appraisal to identify resources and operational constraints should be undertaken as a component of the overall needs assessment. This appraisal should make recommendations on required resources, financial and personnel; suggest strategies; and provide estimated budgetary costs" (PDABI804, Southern Africa).

However, often very rapid onset disasters often do not allow time for USAID to "corroborate the level of need and subsequent judgement regarding the type and level of assistance required. This can result in an unfocused use of USAID resources and, thereby, a less than effective response" (PDABK560, Nicaragua).

"USAID Missions implementing a policy reform agenda must have a high level of policy analysis capability available to them and persons responsible for analysis should not have project implementation responsibilities, because the pressure of implementing project activities often takes precedence over analysis" (PDABL051, Pakistan).

"During the early period of emergencies, data baselines should be established against which emergency relief and rehabilitation progress can be measured. Such baselines would also serve for subsequent monitoring and evaluation" (PDABM622, Northern Iraq).

Household data on income, nutrition and health status should be collected to establish vulnerability criteria for identification of humanitarian aid beneficiaries. This data should be made available in the local languages as well as English, so to maximize its use by several organizations in order to coordinate assistance. Such data helps to target aid carefully as resources become increasingly scarce. (Strategic Development Plan for Georgia).

Beneficiary data -- especially sex-differentiated -- should be collected and used. "In an emergency, it is easy to forget the importance of understanding what is happening to beneficiaries, especially women. In a war environment women are likely to be heads of households in an even larger than normal percentages as their spouses are involved in or casualties of the conflict. Data gathering on the changing circumstances and needs of the displaced and the differential effects on women is essential." (PDABJ697, El Salvador; PNABI659, El Salvador).

The funding requirements of humanitarian assistance activities are unique and require sensitive program design.

"Different sources of funding affect the smooth running of the program and overload the reporting time" (PDABJ468, Malawi and Zimbabwe).

Adding funds to existing projects which can add components to met requirements can be a very effective way to assure a fast start-up of implementation (PNABI659, El Salvador).

MONITORING/EVALUATION:

Monitoring humanitarian assistance activities from the onset of USAID involvement is imperative. Not only does it assist in efficiency, increase accountability, and have the potential to reduce costs, but it also contributes to post-disaster evaluation.

"Strong financial monitoring is needed -- Extra measures may be needed to assure proper financial control when large amounts of resources are involved and channeled through several organizations to large numbers of beneficiaries. Also, when local organizations are involved, concurrent financial monitoring is especially needed because it can be difficult to recover unallowable costs after the fact." (PDABJ697, El Salvador).

"To match its response capability, OFDA should institute a more foolproof procedure to systematize and implement evaluations. Furthermore, a method for monitoring the response while it is ongoing ... could contribute greatly to post-disaster evaluation" (PDABK562, Costa Rica).

"The importance of monitoring in a cross-border program can not be overstated. From the onset of a project it is imperative that the technical assistance team and USAID work together and develop a mutually agreed upon monitoring plan." Such monitoring is critical for the program's accountability requirements (PDABJ201, Afghanistan; PDABI337, Afghanistan).

Meticulously planned and documented programs tend to require considerable staff time. The cost of monitoring was almost nil while the involvement of farmers in the planning and execution was maximal. As a result, the commitment of the farmers was very high and the product was of superb quality. (PDABK221, Afghanistan).

"Utilize video reporting: ... make more use of video reports; they could be used to provide systematic feedback on the progress, problems, and recommendations of project implementation in the field" (PDABK221, Afghanistan).

"If there is unusual interest in the US -- the Congress, special interest groups, the State Department, USAID/Washington -- in the USAID's Peace and Recovery Project, then a sophisticated project data base, management information system, and related staff may be needed to respond -- quickly and without undue disruption to implementation -- to a continuing and large number of inquiries about the project" (PNABI659, El Salvador).

RELIEF TO DEVELOPMENT:

First and foremost, effective development programming should reduce the need for humanitarian assistance.

"Development programming should seek to reduce a country's vulnerability to frequently recurring disasters." (PDABI804, Southern Africa).

Improved natural resource management practices in food insecure regions can have a positive impact on production, thus reducing the need for food aid (Niger R2).

The contribution of agricultural research to food security is "nearly beyond measurement." Programs such as the liberalization of grain markets can increase market efficiency and freedom, which can result in lower food prices, and thus increase food security. Likewise, improved drought-tolerant varieties of small grains can be a significant contribution to food security as overall grain production declines, thus reducing the need for food aid. (Zimbabwe R2; Sahel Regional R2).

Relief programs should include planning for the recovery phase at the initial planning stage of humanitarian assistance.

The distribution of agricultural seed packs to help farmers return to production following abatement of drought has been a successful relief to development program (PDABI804, Southern Africa).

Although the project had short-term humanitarian objectives, the inclusion of a business component in the original design aimed at gradual self-sufficiency of the local implementing PVO, could have ensured developmental, as well as humanitarian, impact (PDABJ524, USAID/Honduras).

"A project to maintain basic infrastructure will likely be a critical need during a civil war in order to avoid economic collapse. Having such a project in place at the end of the war can also accelerate the implementation of reconstruction interventions." In this case, USAID was able to focus substantial resources relatively quickly on the post-war requirements of reconstruction program. (PDABK843, El Salvador).

Bridging activities used to create temporary livelihood to those in need of humanitarian assistance has created a shift in local expectations from humanitarian assistance to development through self-help activities (Strategic Development Plan for Armenia).

Linking relief activities to development programs is not easy.

"Redefinition of an emergency relief project for funding purposes as a combined relief/development effort will only confuse the emergency purpose of the activity, and should be

avoided unless the parts can be administered under the same, emergency, stipulations." (PDABK558, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Zambia).

"These seems to be no way to conceptually or practically distinguish between relief and rehabilitation on the one hand, and between rehabilitation and development on the other. The distinction can be made between relief and development. Projects should promote either one or the other." (PDABK748, Mozambique).

The role of former military in DART management and staffing was an obstacle to the shift of the program from relief to rehabilitation. Thus the original "commodity-driven" approach, with its overemphasis on inputs, was drawn out far longer than necessary. (PDABM622, Northern Iraq).

TRAINING:

Humanitarian assistance programs have distinctive training requirements for both USAID staff and project implementors.

"USAID Management and Staff should receive special training by an expert in conflict resolution/consensus building prior to design of the project. USAID probably will be faced with project counterparts and beneficiaries holding deep-seated emotions, and mutual distrust and animosities towards each other -- and perhaps toward USAID if it is identified with one side of the conflict -- due to their recent belligerent status. ... This is far beyond the normal situations in which USAID attempts to build consensus among a project's stakeholders. Reducing the conflicts and reaching consensus will be a tough job, one for which good preparation is needed." (PNABI659, El Salvador; PDABJ281, El Salvador).

"OFDA should try to incorporate the lessons learned from each disaster in its training programs" (PDABK560, Nicaragua).

"Training strategies should be developed and implemented in tandem with technical assistance activities" (PDABM313, Macedonia).

Training of indigenous leaders and other experts can spread humanitarian assistance lessons learned throughout relevant areas.

The Kenya model of linking technology research, development and transfer with agricultural policy reform (liberalization of markets to allow for commodity movement from surplus to deficit areas) has led to increased food security. Training for officials from nine regional countries at Egerton University's USAID funded Policy Analysis Matrix Team has already spread this lesson throughout the region. (USAID/Kenya Strategic Plan).

DONOR COORDINATION:

Coordination within USAID is necessary in order to streamline humanitarian responses.

In a disaster response, USAID must balance what a country may "wish" and what it can reasonably "expect." Missions in the region should fully utilize the technical expertise of the OFDA staff in determining the kind and level of response to which it should commit. "By relying on the professional judgement of the OFDA staff, the USG Mission will be in a solid position to defend its actions." (PDABK562, Costa Rica).

Local coordination of other donors and agencies is a must for successful humanitarian assistance projects.

"Coordination is often lacking and needs attention in emergency programs to stretch resources and avoid duplication. The natural tendency in emergency programs is to be proactive and to give priority to getting things done. Attention to coordination tends to suffer." (PDABJ697, El Salvador; PDABJ697, El Salvador; PDABJ202, Afghanistan).

USAID has successfully leveraged modest humanitarian assistance funding by coordinating with other donors. Indeed, many donors rely on the technical leadership of USAID in developing assistance plans. (Guatemala R4).

The levels of responsibility and accountability between host government, multilateral organizations, and NGOs need to be defined at an advanced stage of an emergency. "Clear policy guidelines should then be agreed to by the participating partners as soon as possible." (PDABI804, Southern Africa).

At the onset of a disaster, international disaster responses should use a lead agency approach in order to channel and pool resources and to facilitate a unified and complementary response. This agency should work collaboratively between donors and government and have the authority on behalf of government to make quick financial and operational decisions. Senior representatives of key institutions should be designated and vested with appropriate authority to circumvent normal managerial and procurement procedures. Roles and responsibilities should be clearly delineated. However, regardless of which donor/multilateral coordinates overall efforts, bilateral donors contributing significant resources to a relief effort have an obligation to actively participate in decisions as to how those resources are used. (PDABI806, Southern Africa; PDABI804, Southern Africa).

Coordination with other agencies is imperative. "Whenever possible, utilizing existing systems and resources is preferable to duplicating them. While this concept of coordination was readily acceptable in the international aid community, it was rarely realized in a meaningful way during the course of the transition" (PDABK221, Afghanistan).

In a cross-border project it is essential that a counterpart agency is established, with the support of all political actors (PDABJ201, Afghanistan).

The "increasing cooperation of the military and OFDA in complex disasters requires increased specificity of roles, functions, and responsibilities essential to dealing with both the complexity and changing conditions of a response" (PDABM622, Northern Iraq).

"It was only when the donors themselves tied in an agency's future funding to coordination with other groups in standardization efforts, that coordination and standardization took place" (PDABK221, Afghanistan).

Host governments must be included in the coordination process.

"The host government should be pressed to improve its coordination, perhaps by co-chairing with the UN an informal donor coordination group. Still, there probably will be a need for USAID staff to do follow-up coordination with donors working in areas related to USAID-funded activities." (PNABI659, El Salvador).

"Although cross-sectoral and inter-ministerial action is necessary in case of disaster, designation of a coordinating body at the highest level of government will not necessarily ensure coordinated action. Appointment of such a high level body may empower effective inter-ministerial action but does not guarantee it." (PDABI805, Southern Africa).

A USAID funded voluntary registration program for person's effected by both natural and man-made disasters during the transition period can be conducted by host government agencies. Used by USAID and other donors, such systems have facilitated more effective targeting of humanitarian assistance to those most in need. (Strategic Development Plan for Armenia).

"The host government officials should be actively involved in major donor-assisted activities, even when the projects relate to development of private sector" (PDABL051, Pakistan).

"The host government officials should be briefed/sensitized fully to the benefits of different project related activities, especially while creating new institutions" (PDABL051, Pakistan).

Clearly defined lines of communications should be established to maximize coordination and efficiency.

NGOs should keep "local government authorities informed of project plans and activities through such steps as regular direct contacts, inviting them to meetings, and providing copies of project reports" (PDABJ522, Uganda).

"Defining and establishing clear lines of communication within an organization is critical to ensuring an understanding of work responsibilities. Administrative and logistical issues can best be resolved when the persons most affected are involved in problem solving." (PDABM313, Macedonia).

"The need for communication at the national as well as at the local levels with respect to scope and sequence of project activities should not be underestimated" (PDABM313, Macedonia).

The USG Mission should see to it that "its contributions are fully and accurately reported in the news media and given official recognition by the host government" (PDABK562, Costa Rica).

USAID funded organizations can effectively manage the rail, port, and communication networks throughout the disaster-affected country. By removing localized control in the most effected areas, efficient delivery of humanitarian assistance has continued despite the poor state of infrastructure. (Strategic Development Plan for Armenia).

NGO/PVOs:

Identifying and working with local NGOs is critical to the success and sustainability of any program (PDABM313, Macedonia).

"Sustainability should be built in from the start, not retrofitted into the final stages" (PDABJ204, Afghanistan).

On the other hand, "sustainability issues must be given a lesser priority in relief and rehabilitation activities, and not be used to evaluate PVO proposals under the current Project" (PDABK748, Mozambique).

A network of NGOs linked with government authorities can be a powerful vehicle for improving implementation, defining needs, disseminating policies, promoting appropriate intervention methods, training small NGOs, linking them with donors, and advocating on behalf of victims (PDABJ522, Uganda).

An important ancillary impact of USAID humanitarian assistance was the development of a sustainable network of local NGOs which play a role in the development of a peace-time civil society (USAID Zagreb Country Strategic Plan).

Selection of counterpart NGOs/PVOs can be a tricky endeavor.

"NGOs/PVOs with a long presence in-country bring a wealth of experience which enable project managers to hit the ground running, thus eliminating the start-up phase required when a T.A. team is mobilized for implementation" (PDABK221, Afghanistan).

On the other hand, "an assumption should not be made that because an institution has worked well with USAID in a previous project that it will work well initially -- or at all -- in a different type of project" (PNABI659, El Salvador).

"If availability of implementing institutions is limited in a civil conflict context, strengthening support for inexperienced institutions may be needed" (PDABJ697, El Salvador).

STAFFING:

Experienced personnel make a critical difference in the quality and effectiveness of response to a disaster, USAID staffing requirements are, therefore, extremely vital (PDABI805, Southern Africa).

In a civil war situation, "staff up heavily at the onset" (PDABJ281, El Salvador).

Staff levels must be commensurate with the expected outputs or efficiency will be adversely affected (PDABK558, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Zambia).

In a civil war situation, "put a very capable person in charge reporting directly to the director and give him/her the necessary authority to coordinate USAID activity to the maximum extent possible" (PDABJ281, El Salvador).

Likewise, staffing of NGO/PVO and other counterparts is very important.

"USAID staff should work closely with cooperating institutions to get quality candidates nominated" (PDABL051, Pakistan).

"Frequent change-over of expatriate staff, particularly the In-country Director, led to inconsistent implementation" (PDABK221, Afghanistan).

"Especially [important] in the operation of a cross-border program in a war-torn country is the necessity that the contract team has regional specific expertise" (PDABJ201, Afghanistan).

"The high level of [local] employees, including senior level [locals] on the expatriate team and in all key management positions, greatly contributed to the success of this project" (PDABJ201, Afghanistan).

TECHNICAL LESSONS LEARNED IN HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

HEALTH:

"Most disability problems identified in Mozambique could be prevented with good Primary Health Care Services. Polio and measles vaccines, antibiotics and sanitary wound care are among the essential supplies and services which could help reduce the incidence of such disabilities" (PDABK486, Mozambique).

"In spite of the country's need for orthopedic surgeons, mid-level training of personnel remains a priority under the MOH. ... This confirms the need for better needs assessment in the area of training in order to ensure manpower development in areas which are considered high priorities under the MOH." (PDABK486, Mozambique).

"War-wounded activities normally will be a requirement" for humanitarian assistance programs (PNABI659, El Salvador).

"In a war environment one initially believes that much of the medical needs of the community would be directly war-related. This proved to be not true in the Afghan context. The magnitude of injury-related deaths were far outweighed by deaths resulting from diseases which are typical in the third-world, many of which could be prevented by public health measures." (PDABJ202, Afghanistan).

"As the epidemic progresses, relief efforts to assist children orphaned by AIDS become progressively less adequate where government and NGO resources are limited. The strategy should be, first, to strengthen the capacity of families to provide for their children's needs, second, to build the capacity of communities to identify and assist children whose families cannot meet their needs, and third, to help adolescent orphans prepare to support themselves." (PDABJ522, Uganda).

"Counseling is the most critical step in the resettlement process" (PDABJ522, Uganda).

WATER:

"Technical input for water projects must be included in relief programs from the beginning of the design process to the end of the project" (PDABK558, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Zambia).

"Water supply and sanitation infrastructure construction projects in rural areas will not have the desired health impact, nor be sustainable, unless there is organized community participation and meaningful (to the community) health promotion activities preceding, during, and after the construction period" (PDABK843, El Salvador).

"Construction of new water points can provide emergency water supplies. Such construction, if intended as emergency relief, should be designed and managed as such." (PDABK558, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Zambia).

"Health benefits to the beneficiaries cannot be expected unless the water provided is potable. Water cannot be assumed to be potable unless construction standards, including environmental hygiene, are defined and followed. That water quality is acceptable cannot be determined except by analysis." (PDABK558, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Zambia).

FOOD RELIEF:

Title III commodities were especially crucial during the drought recovery period. They stabilized the market supply and forestalled the creation of incentives to divert into the urban markets the food aid intended for needy rural families. (Mozambique R2).

The maintenance of nutrition and health in vulnerable populations by the simple transfer of food commodities, or the means to purchase them is an efficient means of obtaining food security. Mitigation replaces the extremely costly and ineffective method of large scale free food aid distribution to the entire population of a geographic area indicated to be at risk. (Niger R2).

"As a first and preferred choice, a disaster response should carefully consider the feasibility of use of existing food distribution systems. Such an approach is likely to be more cost effective and logistically efficient than setting up a parallel distribution system." (PDABI804, Southern Africa).

"Implementation of the food relief program demonstrated that, on the whole, decentralized management can improve selectively on the central government systems." (PDABI805, Southern Africa).

Realizing that child survival interventions alone have not been successful in reducing malnutrition, USAID is now pursuing a food security strategy that incorporates MCH feeding into PVO child survival programs. (Nicaragua R4).

"Without a full understanding of household demography and income strategies, it is difficult to assess accurately the need for relief food. Food relief agencies tend to overestimate requirements, perhaps because of their experience in providing food to refugee camps where no other sources of supply are available, or in longer term more structurally-determined food shortage situations." (PDABI805, Southern Africa).

"Registers of persons and households needing food relief are subject to inflation in spite of careful design, unless the implementing agency has supplemental information, as from longitudinal household survey data, to verify relative vulnerability of communities and community members." (PDABI805, Southern Africa).

Ending post-war population movements is crucial for food security. When populations are more sedentary, marketing activity flourishes and the agricultural base begins to be reestablished. Dependency on free food distribution then drops dramatically. (Mozambique R2).

"Emergency food assessments must acknowledge and integrate socio-economic and structural factors, and account for behavioral shifts during emergencies, so that the proper amounts of resources are allocated. Re-assessments of needs should be conducted periodically to adjust resources as necessary. If off-farm migration can be prevented, then food assessment should consider that affected populations will be resourceful in employing coping mechanisms and may not need 100% of caloric needs to be supplied by donors." (PDABI806, Southern Africa).

"Food distribution clearly has a key role in a displaced persons program. However, local governments often will not trim those no longer needing food from the rolls for political and bureaucratic self-interest reasons. Donors will have to press for updated lists of needy beneficiaries. Also, an institutional strengthening effort including specialized technical assistance is likely to be required for implementing institutions if food distribution moves from dole feeding to food for work or self-help activities." (PDABJ697, El Salvador).

FOOD-FOR-WORK OR WORK-FOR-CASH PROGRAMS:

"Food for work projects can be an effective self-targeting mechanism to distribute food to those most in need. Experience suggests that participation in food for work projects will be limited to those who are truly needy and have no other ability to earn income. However, it is difficult to hastily create well-designed labor-intensive development projects within the time limitations permitted by emergency planning. If food/cash for work activities are used for emergency relief distribution then care should be taken to ensure sufficient resources will be available to complete projects. Also, the preference should be to expand existing projects rather than to create new activities which may not be well thought through, may lack proper managerial/technical oversight or not be able to secure necessary non-food inputs." (PDABI806, Southern Africa).

Title II food commodities were used by partner PVOs in food-for-work activities which then brought double benefits to the communities in which they worked. Projects included road rehabilitation and repair of irrigation systems. This had the effect of increasing food security in the effected areas and also brought broader economic and social benefits through improved infrastructure. (Mozambique R2).

"Food for work programs do not always fulfill the purposes for which they were established, either to ensure that persons do not receive food for nothing or to accomplish community development projects. A significant factor which mitigates against the success of food for work programs as a disaster relief strategy is that regional/local authorities may not have the capability, or the time during a disaster, to properly design and manage projects that are physically, socially, and economically appropriate." (PDABI805, Southern Africa). One major

constraint to alleviating the poor conditions of the urban displaced from government-controlled territory is that existing criteria for targeting those remaining families who are most vulnerable have not been applied consistently (PDABM622, Northern Iraq).

"Given the problems with FFW projects in Lesotho and elsewhere in Southern Africa, USAID should minimize its involvement in such projects and instead promote effective cash for work modeled on the Botswana experience" (PDABI808, Southern Africa).

"Where income-generating initiatives are used to build family and community capacity, they require careful planning and technical guidance. Irrespective of their social welfare goals, such activities must be economically sound." (PDABJ522, Uganda).

"The jobs program proved to be an effective model -- The experience for Project 5190281 suggests that a jobs program is a useful tool for assisting displaced families. It helped people meet some basic needs while maintaining dignity. At the same time, many useful community projects were accomplished. There are several key principles to keep in mind. An emergency jobs program should be created within as simple a bureaucracy as possible, preferably in the private sector. Work projects should come from representative community organizations and have the approval of local authorities. The delivery system should have careful monitoring and various checks and balances that deter favoritism and corruption. Wages paid should not compete with prevailing job opportunities." (PDABJ697, El Salvador).

SECURITY:

"Access security thoroughly: ... [local military and leaders] need to be organized in such a way that they could provide greater assurance of the safety of the shipments" (PDABK221, Afghanistan).

De-mining efforts should be focused less on the number of mines cleared and more on the area of mine-suspected land freed up for productive purposes. Even if a suspected area does not contain mines, it will be considered inaccessible until certified safe. (Cambodia R4).

The USAID-funded Information and Referral Service (IRS) for ex-combatants is widely credited with providing an "ear" for the demobilized, and thereby reducing the high potential for mass violence by unhappy ex-solders. This effect is compounded by the services to ex-solders that the IRS was created to provide. (Mozambique R2).

ORPHANS:

"In a community where the level of needs is high, expectations will also be high for any project responding to children's needs. It is important at the onset for those implementing the project to sensitize the community and key leaders to the limited availability of resources and to involve them in developing criteria for, and selecting, beneficiaries." (PDABJ522, Uganda).

"While cultural traditions for the care of orphaned children within the extended family are extremely important, it should not be assumed they will ensure that children whose parents die will automatically receive adequate care" (PDABJ522, Uganda).

"Where government child welfare authorities are open and oriented toward constructive approaches, technical assistance can be an effective way to improve the situation of vulnerable children" (PDABJ522, Uganda).

"Laws and regulations specifying standards for children's institutions and specific procedures for certification and closing of homes are critically important. These need to include time limits for institutionalization and provisions to support placement. Regular compliance monitoring is essential." (PDABJ522, Uganda).

"Resettlement from institutions can work, but written guidelines and checklists articulating tracing, pre-resettlement counseling of child and family, and exchange of home visits and follow-up are required" (PDABJ522, Uganda).

EDUCATION/TRAINING:

"Distance learning can be a flexible, cost-effective approach to providing essential information and upgrading skills for child care workers, but careful attention is needed to ensure that the participants can understand the materials easily and that they receive support and encouragement as they study the material" (PDABJ522, Uganda).

"The wisdom of paying teachers' salaries should be carefully assessed. Not only is it an administrative and monitoring nightmare, it is inherently not sustainable. ... Payment of teachers' salaries increases donor dependency. Experience has shown that if schools are provided with textbooks, instructional materials, and teacher training then education will occur." (PDABJ201, Afghanistan).

"Decentralization of the education system through regional education centers was an effective strategy for program implementation ... especially ... when education assistance is provided during a time of war or civil strife." (PDABJ201, Afghanistan).

"Many ex-combatants will have no immediate source of income. Either the Host Government of a donor(s) will have to make provisions to support the ex-combatants, e.g., while they are in training, until the first harvest or for a set period" (PNABI659, El Salvador).

"Complementarity of training and technical assistance was useful. Technical and negotiating meetings helped in identifying deficiencies of expertise Targeted training and supplementary analyses by TA teams made policy dialogue more productive" (PDABL051, Pakistan).

SERVICES:

The provision of legal services to displaced persons helps the affected population to become more socially and economically productive. Examples of successful services include those that focus on: human rights violations, conscientious objectors, repatriation, citizenship, eviction, professional licensing and property rights. (Croatia R4).

Following disasters, USAID has provided improved seedlings and related extension services to affected farmers. Such programs can help to relieve short-term food insecurity as well as reduce long term agricultural risks. (Mozambique R2).

LOGISTICS:

Local populations often have access to local construction materials and may be able to rebuild rather than depend on plastic sheeting (PDABK560, Nicaragua).

"Let farmers provide their own transport: ... bring the goods inside Afghanistan to a central point and let the farmers, who are used to the local political and military landscape, make their own arrangements" (PDABK221, Afghanistan).

Road rehabilitation projects have cut the cost of delivering post-war emergency assistance through improved access. Improved roads have also facilitated the safe return of refugees from neighboring countries. (Mozambique R2).

Using traditional delivery patterns for vaccination, rather than according to the original epidemic control strategy, didn't work (PDABM105, Ukraine).

"The possibility of unauthorized use, at least from USAID's standpoint, of project funded vehicles commonly exists in USAID projects" (PDABK843, El Salvador).

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